

**Virginia SRC for the Blind and Vision Impaired Quarterly Meeting  
Agenda**

**March 10, 2023, 9:30 a.m. – 1:00 p.m.  
397 Azalea Avenue, Richmond, VA 23227  
DBVI Main Conference Room**

**Zoom information:**

<https://vadars.zoom.us/j/83521956249?pwd=YVdnRlZQN0M1M2paUjdaalROWEhkZz09>

**Password: 088688**

**Or Telephone:**

Dial:

+1 786 635 1003 (US Toll)

+1 971 247 1195 (US Toll)

+1 669 900 6833 (US Toll)

**Meeting ID: 835 2195 6249**

**Password: 088688**

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|------------|--|
| 9:30 a.m.  | <b>Member Networking - OPTIONAL</b> – Coffee   |
| 10:00 a.m. | <b>Welcome and Call to Order</b> – <i>Alexa Bowe</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. Adoption of Agenda</li><li>2. Approval of December 2022, Meeting Minutes</li></ul> |
| 10:10 a.m. | <b>Public Comment</b>  |
| 10:20 a.m. | <b>Commissioner's Report</b> – <i>Dr. Rick Mitchell</i><br>Updates to Agency Report  |
| 10:30 a.m. | <b>Deputy Commissioner's Report</b> – <i>Pam Cato</i><br>Updates to Agency Report  |
| 10:40 a.m. | <b>VR Program Update</b> – <i>Megan Hall</i><br>Updates to Agency Report   |

10:50 a.m.            **Old and New Business** – *Alexa Bowe*

1. Customer Satisfaction – *Deborah Collard*
2. Proposed language to the council members regarding the new FOIA Amendment
3. Volunteers for annual report
4. CSAVR Spring Conference April 15-19, 2023, Bethesda, Maryland
5. Being a more active council member
6. Quorum and attendance

12:00 p.m.   **Break/Pick up Lunch**

12:10 p.m.   **Networking Lunch**

12:30 p.m.   **Representative Roundtable**

Heidi Lawyer – PEATC

Joliefawn Liddell – dCLV

Marianne Moore – VDOE

Milford Stern – Dept of Labor & Industry

Leelyn Brady - SILC

1:00 p.m.        **Adjourn**

Department for Blind and Vision Impaired  
State Rehabilitation Council  
Agency VR Report  
March 10, 2023

**Deputy Commissioner's Report – Pam Cato**

**Regional Office Updates**

Bristol	Fully Staffed
Fairfax	Recruiting for a Rehabilitation Teacher
Norfolk	Recruiting for a part-time Rehabilitation Technology Specialist
Richmond	Fully Staffed
Roanoke	Fully Staffed
Staunton	Recruiting for an Orientation and Mobility Specialist
Headquarters	Recruiting for the Rehabilitation Teaching & Independent Living Program Director
Business Relations Unit	Fully Staffed
VRCBVI	Recruiting for an Access Technology Instructor

**State Plan Goals**

DBVI, with assistance from the State Rehabilitation Council (SRC), developed six goals and priorities for the Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) and Supported Employment (SE) programs for this state plan cycle. The six goals are listed below and updates are included in this report.

1. Expanding and enhancing workforce development activities to develop and maintain effective working relationships with Virginia business and industry at the local, regional, and state level to develop partnerships that facilitate industry recognized credential attainment, skill development, and entry into career pathways for eligible individuals who are blind, vision impaired, or deafblind leading to competitive integrated employment.
2. Increasing and improving competitive integrated employment outcomes, with wages above the state average, for all blind, vision impaired, or deafblind individuals receiving services from DBVI.
3. Achieving agency annual performance goals and establishing base lines for the performance accountability measures based on primary indicators of

performance in section 116(b)(2)(A) of the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act of 2014.

4. Providing rehabilitation technology to blind, vision impaired, or deafblind individuals, including youth and students, to facilitate their success in training and competitive integrated employment settings.
5. Expanding transition services for youth and students seeking employment and/or post-secondary training; including pre-employment transition services for secondary school students.
6. Expanding the utilization of Supported Employment services for adults and youth to increase competitive integrated employment outcomes for individuals with the most significant disabilities.

### **Business Relations Unit Updates- Cindy Roberts**

The Business Relations Unit has begun a partnership with Florida Lighthouse for the Blind surrounding their need for qualified customer service representatives, supervisors, and quality assurance staff to support an ongoing contract with Florida Family Services (Medicare, Medicaid, and SNAP). To date, 5 individuals have been hired, 15 more have interviewed and have contingent job offers (background check) and 2 others have been working with the Lighthouse successfully for the past two weeks. The positions are remote positions, JAWS accessible and the employer is providing the technology needed including computers fully loaded with JAWS/Zoom Text. Full-time positions come with an excellent benefit package as well as 401K.

The Business Relations team has rekindled their relationship with CVS Health after COVID. Members of their workforce team will be visiting campus on Tuesday, April 4<sup>th</sup> for a working lunch, tour and collaboration surrounding a call center that will be built in the Richmond area. They are looking to partner with DBVI to help provide a pipeline of talented individuals. DBVI is also in the final stages of completing paperwork that will allow career seekers to participate in paid work-based learning experiences within CVS stores. CVS has acquired AETNA Insurance, which will provide more employment opportunities for those interested in this field

Business Relations Specialists have already started setting up worksites for paid work-based learning opportunities for college students for the Summer. Opportunities have been created with the Richmond Civil War Museum, Dept for

Environmental Quality, and the Central Va Legal Aide Society. This is just a small sampling of what is to come.

The first session of "Steer Your Career" for the new year will be ending this month. Approximately 12 career seekers (largest class yet) have been actively engaged in crafting an elevator speech, knowing themselves as a career seeker, resume writing, disclosing a disability to a business and opportunities for work-based learning. Our next session will begin May 4<sup>th</sup>. This continues as a best practice as individuals from this class have received employment offers before the class finished.

DBVI's paid work-based learning (pwbl) for adults continues to see ongoing success. Two individuals that participated in pwbl were moved into On the Job Training (employed) with DBVI paying a percentage of the wages back to the business to allow the employee to continue training on the job. Two more individuals will be entering into pwbl in March

DBVI Career Connections is still being held monthly. NSITE (National Industries for the Blind/NIB) was a guest presenter in February and provided an overview of different types of training offered and gave a demonstration of their online portal where businesses can post job listings and career seekers can post their resume. The guest speaker for March will be Linda Aase, Selective Placement Coordinator, Civilian Workforce Management, US Coast Guard (DOT). She will provide information on applying for federal jobs, Schedule A hiring and positions within the Coast Guard.

The Business Relations Unit continues to be engaged with the Council of State Administrators in Vocational Rehabilitation (CSAVR) as well as continued facilitation of the National Employment Team (NET) Point of contact (POC) Region Three meetings. The DBVI team is actively engaged with business solutions meetings, federal job club, Va Ability and the DCBLN (business leadership network). The team also continues to partner with their sister agency DARS (Virginia Department of Aging and Rehabilitation Services) in leading diversity training and joint business meetings. A spring meeting is being planned on campus with DARS Business Development Managers and DBVI Business Relations Specialist.

Members of the Business Team will be presenting at the DOLI (Department of Labor and Industry) VOSH (Virginia Occupational Safety and Health) Conference being held in Newport News in late March. Milford Stern, SRC member, has been instrumental in helping to develop this relationship. The team will be

providing an overview of DBVI services to business with emphasis on 503c and assisting federal contractors with attaining their utilization goals of hiring individuals with disabilities and veterans.

Penni Wetherell will be assuming the role of Business Relations Specialist for the Valley Region. Penni comes to DBVI with 13 years of job placement and development for individuals with disabilities, is certified in Windmills (Disability Awareness training) as well as a background in human resources. Penni will begin work at the Roanoke Regional Office on March 10th and will be an excellent addition to the business relations team, which will be fully staffed.

### **VRCBVI- Brooke Rogers**

#### **New/Departing Staff:**

Raymond Brown – Part Time Wellness Instructor – started 1/12/2023

Michelle Haywood – Personal Home Management Instructor – started 2/25/2023

#### **Programming Update:**

- **Adult Training Program**

VRCBVI currently has 17 students in the adult program. 12 are residential students and four are commuter students. We have four additional residential students and one commuter student starting in March 2023, one residential student starting in April 2023, one commuter student starting in May 2023, and one residential student starting in September 2023.

We have thirteen students who have been accepted to attend VRCBVI who will be scheduled to start training in Spring 2023 or Fall 2023 as spaces become available.

- **2023 LIFE (“Learning Independence, Feeling Empowered”) Program** – The program flyer was sent out and we are accepting applications for this program:

[Youth & Other Programs \(virginia.gov\)](https://www.virginia.gov/youth-and-other-programs)

**Are You Ready for the Adventure of Your LIFE?  
 (“Learning Independence, Feeling Empowered”)**

## **What is LIFE?**

4-week residential training program for students between the ages of 14-18 years old who are returning to a high school academic program in the fall of 2023

Provides basic training in the skills of blindness and advocacy skills

Helps students become responsible for their lives

Provides students with opportunities to explore employment and college goals

Provides an opportunity to gain real world work experience or additional skills of blindness training

Affords opportunities to participate in physical fitness and confidence building activities

Offers opportunities to network with successful mentors who are blind or vision-impaired

Helps students develop positive strategies for dealing with misconceptions about blindness

Provides daily opportunities to have LOTS of fun!

## **Important Dates for LIFE:**

***Application Deadline:*** 11:59 PM, Monday, May 8, 2023

Program Begins: Sunday, July 9, 2023 - check-in - 1:00 - 4:00 p.m.

Program Ends: Friday, August 4, 2023 - 12:00 p.m.

Graduation Ceremony: Friday, August 4, 2023 - 10:00 a.m.

Student/parent meetings with staff via Zoom: August 7-10, times will be scheduled

## **Vocational Rehabilitation Program Report – Megan Hall and Deborah Collard**

As discussed at previous SRC meetings, DBVI has transitioned to the Workforce Innovation and Opportunities Act (WIOA) Common Performance Measures (CPM). These measures replace the Standards and Indicators report that was previously shared with the SRC. The six core WIOA programs are all required to now report on the CPMs. The six core partners in WIOA include:

- Adult Formula Program (WIOA title I)
- Youth Formula Program (WIOA title I)



- Dislocated Worker Formula Program (WIOA title I)
- Adult Education and Family Literacy Act (WIOA title II)
- Wagner-Peyser Act Employment Service (WIOA title III)
- Vocational Rehabilitation program (WIOA title IV)

### Common Performance Measures:

Under section 116(b)(2)(A) of WIOA, there are six primary indicators of performance:

A. Employment Rate – 2nd Quarter After Exit: The percentage of participants who are in unsubsidized employment during the second quarter after exit from the program (for title I Youth, the indicator is the percentage of participants in education or training activities, or in unsubsidized employment during the second quarter after exit);

B. Employment Rate – 4th Quarter After Exit: The percentage of participants who are in unsubsidized employment during the fourth quarter after exit from the program (for title I Youth, the indicator is the percentage of participants in education or training activities, or in unsubsidized employment during the fourth quarter after exit);

C. Median Earnings – 2nd Quarter After Exit: The median earnings of participants who are in unsubsidized employment during the second quarter after exit from the program;

D. Credential Attainment: The percentage of those participants enrolled in an education or training program (excluding those in on-the-job training (OJT) and customized training) who attain a recognized postsecondary credential or a secondary school diploma, or its recognized equivalent, during participation in or within one year after exit from the program. A participant who has attained a secondary school diploma or its recognized equivalent is included in the percentage of participants who have attained a secondary school diploma or its recognized equivalent only if the participant also is employed or is enrolled in an education or training program leading to a recognized postsecondary credential within one year after exit from the program;

E. Measurable Skill Gains: The percentage of program participants who, during a program year, are in an education or training program that leads to a recognized postsecondary credential or employment and who are achieving measurable skill gains, defined as documented academic, technical, occupational, or other forms



of progress, towards such a credential or employment. Depending on the type of education or training program, documented progress is defined as one of the following:

- a) Documented achievement of at least one educational functioning level of a participant who is receiving instruction below the postsecondary education level;
- b) Documented attainment of a secondary school diploma or its recognized equivalent;
- c) Secondary or postsecondary transcript or report card for a sufficient number of credit hours that shows a participant is meeting the State unit's academic standards<sup>2</sup>;
- d) Satisfactory or better progress report, towards established milestones, such as completion of OJT or completion of one year of an apprenticeship program or similar milestones, from an employer or training provider who is providing training; or
- e) Successful passage of an exam that is required for a particular occupation or progress in attaining technical or occupational skills as evidenced by trade-related benchmarks such as knowledge-based exams.

F. Effectiveness in Serving Employers: WIOA sec. 116(b)(2)(A)(i)(VI) requires the Departments (DOE and DOL) to establish a primary indicator of performance for effectiveness in serving employers. The Departments are piloting three approaches designed to gauge three critical workforce needs of the business community.

Approach 1 – Retention with the same employer – addresses the programs' efforts to provide employers with skilled workers;

Approach 2 – Repeat Business Customers – addresses the programs' efforts to provide quality engagement and services to employers and sectors and establish productive relationships with employers and sectors over extended periods of time; and

Approach 3 – Employer Penetration Rate – addresses the programs' efforts to provide quality engagement and services to all employers and sectors within a State and local economy.

<sup>2</sup> Within each State there is an administrative unit that provides authorization to postsecondary institutions within the State. States differ in the requirements to which they hold postsecondary institutions responsible for satisfactory progress. Progress for WIOA purposes must comply with any applicable State standards. Likewise, every State has a State educational agency that establishes education standards for secondary education within the State, which would apply for purposes of determining if a participant is meeting the State’s academic standards.

WIOA Employer Engagement Common Performance Measure (CPM)

DBVI reports with WIOA core partners on the joint CPM of Effectiveness in Serving Employers as described below:

- 1. Effectiveness in Serving Employers (States select two of three measures) – Virginia has selected employer retention and employer penetration as described below:
  - Retention with the same employer – addresses the programs’ efforts to provide employers with skilled workers; and
  - Employer Penetration Rate - addresses the programs' efforts to provide quality engagement and services to all employers and sectors within a State and local economy.

Since this indicator is a new approach for measuring performance under WIOA’s six core programs, DOE and RSA have implemented a pilot program during which States must select two of the three approaches. DOE and RSA will evaluate State experiences with the various approaches and plan to identify a standardized indicator to be implemented in the future.

All state VR agencies nationwide continue working with RSA on reporting of WIOA Common Performance Measures (CPM) and utilizing RSA 911 data along with performance data dashboards developed by RSA to demonstrate VR program performance. Based on current information, DBVI is able to report on several measures as shown in the table below.

CPM	PY17	PY18	PY19	PY20	PY21
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Employment rate 2 <sup>nd</sup> Q after exit	N/A	42.2% DBVI 51.5% VA*	37.6% DBVI 54.4% VA*	39.9% DBVI 51.6% VA*	39%
Employment rate 4 <sup>th</sup> Q after exit	N/A	N/A	27.7% DBVI 52.2% VA*	30.2% DBVI 47.5% VA*	33%
Median Earnings 2 <sup>nd</sup> Q after exit	N/A	\$4362 DBVI \$3011 VA*	\$4445 DBVI \$3127 VA*	\$5540 DBVI \$3238 VA*	\$4878
Credential Attainment Rate	N/A	N/A	16.7% DBVI	61.8% DBVI 43.3% VA*	49%
Measureable Skill Gains (MSG) Rate	19.5% DBVI 40.2 % VA*	53.0% DBVI 45.0% VA*	82.6% DBVI 85.65 VA*	85.5% DBVI 88.9% VA*	85%
Number of DBVI Participants Earning an MSG**	95	249	247	243	244
Effectiveness in Serving Employers	Reported as a statewide measure with WIOA partners				
Employer Retention Rate	N/A	N/A	62% VA*	70% DBVI TBD VA	69%
Employer Penetration - DBVI	187 services 109 businesses	256 services 129 businesses	266 services 132 businesses	190 services 84 businesses	190 services 117 businesses

\*Reported for the state of Virginia, this includes Department for Aging and Rehabilitative Services (DARS) VR data combined with DBVI VR data.

\*\*Not a WIOA CPM, but considered a primary indicator of performance by RSA.

As part of the implementation of the WIOA CPMs and to assist state VR agencies with determining how the RSA 911 data elements are used and how the CPMs are calculated, RSA has developed a set of five dashboards or graphics that illustrate key data elements. One of the dashboards outlines Competitive Integrated Employment (CIE) outcomes. In PY21 Q4 there were 32 CIE outcomes achieved. DBVI continues to have a wide variety of occupations and strong median wages represented in CIE outcomes. The top ten careers by Standard Occupation Classification (SOC) categories, median hourly wage, and median weekly hours are listed in the table below.

Standard Occupational Classification	Individuals	Median Hours	Median Wage
Office and Administrative Support Workers, All Other	3	27	\$12.15
Managers, All Others	2	40	\$34.14
Management Analysts	2	40	\$21.40

Janitors and Cleaners, Except Maids and Housekeeping Cleaners	2	22	\$11.00
Customer Service Representatives	2	18	\$13.00
Agents, Except Wholesale, Retail and Farm Products	1	40	\$27.22
Mental Health Counselors	1	20	\$100.00
Insurance Sales Agents	1	40	\$18.00
Secretaries and Executive Administrative Assistants	1	18	\$18.75
Business Operations Specialists, All Other	1	40	\$30.29

Another WIOA performance area where DBVI continues to be consistent and robust is in the provision of the required pre-employment transition services (Pre-ETS). For PY2021 Q4, DBVI reported 112 students receiving pre-ETS, including the following number of services provided: 43 job exploration counseling services (14.3%), 74 work based learning experiences (24.7%), 74 counseling and enrollment opportunities services (24.7%), 57 work readiness training experiences (19.0%), and 52 instructions in self advocacy services (17.3%).

Additionally, through the national Rehab Data Workgroup, RSA has shared several "Other Measures that Matter" with the RSA quarterly Dashboards. These measures are provided to enhance the VR agencies' understanding of the use of the new data elements collected and the implementation of WIOA. For FPY21 DBVI can share Other Measures that Matters #4: The Provision of VR Services. In FPY21 Q4, DBVI had 890 total VR participants of which 868 participants received services representing 97.5 % of participants receiving VR services. This is consistent with FPY21 Q3 where DBVI had 97% of participants receiving VR services.

DBVI can also share Other Measures that Matters #5: Percent of Participants Enrolled in Education/Training Program Leading to a Recognized Credential/Employment. For FPY21 Q4, DBVI had 890 total VR participants of which 261 participants were eligible to earn a measurable skill gain (MSG) representing 29.3% of participants eligible to earn an MSG. This is an increase from FPY21 Q3 where DBVI had 27.2% of participants who were eligible to earn an MSG.

The Other Measures provided by the national Rehab Data Workgroup through RSA will continue to be monitored and analyzed by the VR team. The information will be used to inform decisions about program implementation and ongoing improvement.

### **Pre-Employment Transition Services and Career Pathways – Tish Harris**

DBVI Pre-Employment Transition Services have hit the ground running in 2023. In January, the second annual town hall was held with 65 individual accounts in attendance (with many family members attending under one account). The town hall focused on all upcoming Pre-ETS programs including Android Answers, That's Entertainment, Blind Design, Financial literacy, Leap into Linux, LIFE, Cyber Warriors and JMU Success. The team is busy finalizing plans for the Fall of 2023 to include the Tiered IT Cohort, Careers in Action in Williamsburg, VA, and the IT credential fair. During the town hall, the team also introduced a "Universal Application" which alleviates the need for parents and families to complete a new full application for each program. This application was born from feedback from families who stated that they were getting overwhelmed with having to fill out the same information numerous times for each program that their student wanted to attend. After only one month of receiving applications, the team has received over 20 completed applications showing interest and intent to participate in all programs.

### **VR Consumer Satisfaction Evaluation Program - Deborah Collard**

The VR consumer satisfaction evaluation program for FPY2021 continues with outreach to 211 eligible individuals with VR cases closed July 1, 2021 – June 30, 2021. During the current cycle of the evaluation program several changes have been implemented in order to improve response rate and enhance the feedback received. DBVI partnered with the SRC to update and edit the survey platform and questions for FPYs 2020 and 2021. These updates, including additional personnel resources to provide follow up, have been implemented and show indications of improvement in response rate and reduction of response time. The current response rate is approximately 40%, up from 30% in FPY20. Additionally, the time to complete the evaluation is down approximately 20%.

Adjustments to outreach of eligible individuals who may participate in the evaluation, including the re-introduction of providing the option to complete the survey by mail, and increased follow up activities with the addition of resources, were implemented in March 2021. DBVI anticipates the response rate will continue to remain close to 40% and subsequently, enhance the valuable feedback received.

Responses to the VR consumer satisfaction evaluation continue to be shared with the Director of VR and Workforce for consultation, training planning, resolution of potential issues, and continuous program improvement. Data review and analysis will continue to take place in order to provide quarterly updates to the SRC and as needed.

Response summaries and graphics for FPY2022 can be viewed at [PY 2022 Virginia](#)



[Department for the Blind and Vision Impaired \(DBVI\): Vocational Rehabilitation \(VR\) Consumer Satisfaction evaluation - JAWS compatible Survey \(surveymonkey.com\)](#)

### **VR Customer Satisfaction PRELIMINARY results to date; through June 2022.**

The information in Tables 1 and 2 below, includes preliminary data from FPY2021 evaluation responses. The FPY2021 evaluation program is open through the third calendar quarter of 2022. Data included in this update are preliminary\* and are subject to change.

**Table 1. Overall Satisfaction rating with the VR Program FFY2016 through current FPY2021, range = 20-100 points.**

Year	Total	Rehabilitated	Not Rehabilitated
FFY2016	73.7	82.8	63.3
FFY2017	79.7	85.6	69.8
FFY2018	78.6	94.7	58.5
FFY2019 & 2020	73.3	87.3	45.5
FPY2020	78.8	91.82	71.20
FPY2021*	89.0	TBD	TBD

**Table 2. Satisfaction with VR Staff FFY2016 through FPY2021, range = 20 – 100 points.**

How satisfied are you that your VR Counselor was:

Year	Respectful	Knowledgeable About your disability	Sensitive to your needs
FFY2016	83.7	78.6	78.0
FFY2017	86.6	86.0	83.9
FFY2018	92.9	81.4	85.7
FFY2019 & 2020	84.4	83.8	85.7
FPY2020	85.8	87.2	84.3
FPY2021*	92.0	89.8	92.1



**Regional Office Happenings:**

- **Bristol-** Traveled to Virginia Tech, Blacksburg, VA and presented to VT Students and staff in preparation for Blind Design 2023 and working with individuals who are blind or vision impaired. This has been a successful collaboration with the university. The DBVI Team presenting were Meg Walker (O&M), Andrew Davis (O&M), Theresa Jamison (RT), Lauren Pridemore (VRC), and Kathy Malone (SM). I'm sharing the Instructor's kind email:
  - **From:** Andrew Gipe-Lazarou <lazarou@vt.edu>  
**Sent:** Tuesday, January 31, 2023 2:39 AM  
**To:** Malone, Kathy (DBVI) <Kathy.Malone@dbvi.virginia.gov>; Walker, Meg H. (DBVI) <Meg.Walker@dbvi.virginia.gov>  
**Subject:** Thank You!

On behalf of the School of Architecture and my students, many thanks to you and your team for leading an exceptional learning experience yesterday afternoon.

Kathy, I know you guys come quite a ways up from Bristol; thanks for this, and please tell Courtney we missed him this year.

And Meg, I really appreciate you working with my studio on the fly (next year, I'll make sure to coordinate this with you properly).

I look forward to our continued collaborations.

Thanks again,

**Andrew Gipe-Lazarou, PhD**

Visiting Instructor, Virginia Tech  
School of Architecture + Design

- Rashon Davis from VCU that served his internship with DBVI last semester has started as Rehabilitation Counselor with Vocational Rehabilitation Services, NC Department of Health and Human Services

**Bristol Success Story:** T. said that he had lost all purpose in life and was depressed all the time. He said that he cried when he got his first paycheck and actually had money left over. He is very happy with his job. The staff at Popeye's, Subway and Taco Bell all say he does an excellent job. The General Manager told him that they have received more compliments from the truck drivers and

other customers than they ever have. She said that they are even calling corporate office and telling them how good the restaurants look now. T. is sweeping and moping the floors, cleaning the tables and chairs and cleaning the counters in all three restaurants. T. also makes the tea as well as keeping the sanitizing water changed in all three restaurants. He is also taking the trash to the dumpster. This is most of his duties and he could not be happier. Once again, he sends his thanks to everyone for all the help that he has received from DBVI staff.

## **Norfolk-**

- NRO was excited to learn the new attachment feature process for the AWARE case management system. This system allows printed documents to be uploaded and available electronically rather than being filed in a paper file. Now that the attachment feature is set up, NRO is no longer producing paper files and will begin transitioning all new cases to the electronic format.

### **Norfolk Success Story-**

Last May CF was referred by his TVI to Leap into Linux. CF, was graduating high school in June and had no idea what he was going to do or what his next steps were going to be. Working with the Norfolk office, we got him set up for Leap into Linux in June of 2022. CF was quiet upon arrival, which quickly changed to a smile as he made friends among the cohort. On day 3 at lunch, he caught Tish Harris outside the cafeteria and told her, "I love this, I just love it! Can I do more of this?"

Tish and CF sat down and discussed his career path and came up with a plan for him to participate in Cyber Warriors over the summer to build skills and explore various tech pathways, and join the Launching Point program at JMU over the summer. If he still liked technology, his next step on the plan was the join the tiered IT cohort in the fall, and then apply and attend community college in Spring of 2023.

CF has followed through on every step of the plan! After he successfully completed Leap into Linux and created and coded his own website, he took Cyber Warriors programs, including building and coding a drone, which was his favorite. During the summer, CF came to Launching Point at JMU, exhibiting leadership skills that earned him a Mentor in Training opportunity. He also followed through in the Fall of 2022 and took Comp TIA Fundamentals Training and Information Technology Infrastructure Library (ITIL), earning an ITIL industry recognized credential. This spring, CF began classes at Tidewater Community College, taking History, English and Student Development. His plan is to transfer to a 4 year university

In addition to his training gains and career exploration, CF exhibited such strong leadership and employability skills while at Launching Point at JMU that he was offered to be a Mentor-in-Training at Careers in Action at Natural Bridge. He did a great job and will be offered paid work based learning as a Mentor in upcoming 2023 summer programs!

### **Fairfax-**

- Regarding hiring initiatives: Florida Lighthouse is a statewide success! In Coffee and Collaborations session we counted approximately 20 DBVI job seekers who either have a start date or will have one once their finger printing and background checks are complete. And Florida Lighthouse has more openings to fill! 8 FRO clients appear to be in the hiring process.
- VRC Stuck comments on FRO Pre-ets activity: "In my VR world, there has been a large focus on pre ets. I have had numerous meetings with families. So far, 7 pre ets students have been referred to 18 combined pre ets programs".
- Tish Harris comments further regarding FRO's participation in various Pre-Ets programming: Staff from Fairfax served as Program Ambassadors and were tremendous in helping to pull off the IT Credential Fair. We had Diane, Lapearl, Holly, Denise, Bilal and Nitesh on site to meet, greet and assist with the Zoom and chat box so that our presenters could smoothly move forward with each of their portions. Without your staff we could not have pulled the event off, especially trying to monitor the Zoom and recording while watching the chat box. I am so thankful for all of them. Here are the numbers for the Fair, which Fairfax office helped to sponsor:
- Students-64 – Virtual 38 – In Person 26. Total is higher since 3 schools had one log in with students gathering in a group. We estimate total attendance as 75!

**Fairfax Success Story:** KC, current age 16, began with DBVI STEM programs with Leap into Linux in 2021 at 14. This energetic and self-directed young man then followed up with Cyber Warriors in 2021 and 2022, as well as joining the Fall 2022 IT tiered cohort. KC passed his Comp TIA Fundamentals and ITIL credential tests and completed Security + training.

### **Richmond-**

**Richmond Success Story:** SJ joined the group at Launching Point at JMU this past summer. Previous to JMU, SJ had been intermittent in her responses and meeting with her vocational counselor Felicia Williams. SJ had a few struggles the first day or two at JMU with anxiety and worry about fitting in, but as she made friends she became more outgoing and engaged. One evening at JMU, SJ volunteered to lead the Dance Party,

even challenging one of the mentors to join her. SJ increased confidence at JMU leading her to join DBVI at Careers in Action at Natural Bridge. At Careers in Action, we saw more forward movement as SJ began to lose anxiety over participating, and she volunteered to answer questions and to once again lead the Dance Party.

In January at Resiliency, SJ volunteered to remember 24 different items and report them to the group in order, which she proceeded to do. SJ has already applied for more Pre-ETs programs and wants to be a mentor in training at JMU this year. She is also moving forward with college and was accepted into community college at J Sargeant Reynolds.

“Participating in the DBVI programs have benefitted me a lot by giving me a deeper look into careers and college life. The biggest examples of these are Blind Design and staying at JMU respectively. I've learned a lot through these programs thanks to the hands-on immersion some of the activities offered. Even walking through the college campus has taught me a lot through orientation and mobility. If you have the chance, I would definitely recommend trying these different programs. You will learn so much, whether it be through a Zoom session or walking through a college campus!” SJ

## **Roanoke-**

**Roanoke Success Story-** Following is a highlight video of one of the successful employment situations from the Roanoke Region that highlights cooperative efforts with DBVI, DARS and Project Search: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=v7GbgMyphoU>

## **Staunton-**

- Despite SRO getting dislocated from the physical office building at the end of December, no service interruption has been noted and our VR counselors continue to open new cases and keep job seekers moving forward in their respective employment plans. We learned many valuable lessons and business practices during COVID and field staff have not skipped a beat in continuing to offer DBVI VR services in a timely manner.
- The SRO team was trained on the AWARE attachment feature, which enables more options for documentation in electronic form, stored all in one place, accessible from anywhere. This has helped alleviate some issues related to loss of a building and accessible hard copy files and increases efficiency and productivity of field staff who may need access an eye report or other document, while out in the field or teleworking.
- VRC Mike Thelk completed an outreach at James Madison University on 2/21/23. Mike has been doing this outreach for many years but not the past two years due to COVID. Information about DBVI was presented to the approximately 30 students in the gerontology course. Mike handed out several

things to increase their awareness of our agency and how to work effectively with people with visual disabilities. This included a flyer on how to interact with individuals who are visually impaired as well as the cards which can be used to simulate different eye conditions. The students were engaged and asked questions. He also demonstrated canes and night shades and invited students to practice using these together to increase their awareness of people who are visually impaired in addition to discussing the benefits of the folding cane.

- VRC LaSonya Jackson connected with two companies that will allow clients participate in work-based learning experiences. One company, Portco, is interested in hiring her client and are working on the details, as they are coming off of a hiring freeze. Another company, Breg International, is slated to have two clients participate in work based learning experiences, with potential start of March 6th.
- The Staunton Regional Office began hosting an American Sign Language (ASL) class, taught by an ASL instructor from WWRC (Wilson Workforce and Rehabilitation Center). The class is conducted weekly via Teams Meeting and participation has been consistent from several offices statewide.
- Both VRC's have been actively recruiting for the many DBVI programs offered, as well as other community events. So far, we have students planning to attend Blind Design (3), LIFE (1), Android Productivity (1), and I'm Determined (1).





**A Summary of Selected  
Freedom of Information Act  
2022 Provisions**

**DBVI State  
Rehabilitation Council  
December 9, 2022**

**Susan K. Davis  
Senior Policy Analyst  
Department for the Blind and  
Vision Impaired**

## **Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) Policy Considerations**

- Ensures the people of the Commonwealth ready access to public records in the custody of public officials.
- Ensures free entry to meetings of public bodies wherein the business of the people is being conducted.

“The affairs of the government are not intended to be conducted in an atmosphere of secrecy since at all times the public is to be the beneficiary of any action taken at any level of governments.”

[Virginia Code § 2.2-3700](#)

### **Definitions – Effective September 1, 2022**

- "All-virtual public meeting" means a public meeting (i) conducted by a public body, other than those excepted pursuant to subsection C of § [2.2-3708.3](#), using electronic communication means, (ii) during which all members of the public body who participate do so remotely rather than being assembled in one physical location, and (iii) to which

public access is provided through electronic communication means. ([§ 2.2-3701](#))

- "Electronic communication" means the use of technology having electrical, digital, magnetic, wireless, optical, electromagnetic, or similar capabilities to transmit or receive information. ([§ 2.2-3701](#))
- "Public body" means any legislative body, authority, board, bureau, commission, district, or agency of the Commonwealth...and other organizations or corporations or agencies in the Commonwealth supported wholly or principally by public funds. It shall include any committee, sub-committee, or other entity however designated of the public body created to perform delegated functions of the public body or to advise the public body. It shall not exclude any such committee, subcommittee, or entity because it has private sector or citizen members. Virginia Code [§ 2.2-3700](#)
- "Remote participation" means participation by an individual member of a public body by electronic communication means in a public meeting where a

quorum of the public body is otherwise physically assembled. ([§ 2.2-3701](#))

## **Why does the SRC need to know about FOIA?**

- Any person elected, reelected, appointed, or reappointed to anybody not to be excepted from this chapter ***shall*** (i) be furnished by the public body's administrator or legal counsel with a copy of this chapter within two weeks following election, reelection, appointment or reappointment and (ii) read and become familiar with the provisions of this chapter. Virginia Code § [2.2-3703](#)

## **What is covered by FOIA?**

- FOIA covers two general areas:
  - Meetings
  - Records

## **How are meetings defined?**

- Meetings include work sessions
- When sitting physically or through electronic communication
- Requires (i) three members; or (ii) a quorum, if less than three.

Virginia Code [§ 2.2-3701](#)

**What if you go to a social function or other gathering and there are two or more members of the Council there?**

- Not prohibited if:
  - No part of the purpose of such a gathering is the discussion or transaction of any public business
  - Not called or prearranged with any purpose of discussing or transacting any business of the council

**FOIA Meeting Requirements**

- All meeting shall be open to the public, unless subject to a specific provision for a closed meeting.  
Virginia Code [§ 2.2-3711](#)
- Public includes the media
- Any person may photograph, film, record or otherwise reproduce any portion of a meeting required to be open





Analysis of COV § 2.2-3708.3. (Effective September 1, 2022) Meetings held through electronic communications means; situations other than declared states of emergency. (2022 updated section)

#### Relevant Definitions

"All-virtual public meeting" means a public meeting (i) conducted by a public body, other than those excepted pursuant to subsection C of § [2.2-3708.3](#), using electronic communication means, (ii) during which all members of the public body who participate do so remotely rather than being assembled in one physical location, and (iii) to which public access is provided through electronic communication means. (§ 2.2-3701)

"Electronic communication" means the use of technology having electrical, digital, magnetic, wireless, optical, electromagnetic, or similar capabilities to transmit or receive information. (§ 2.2-3701)

"Remote participation" means participation by an individual member of a public body by electronic communication means in a public meeting where a quorum of the public body is otherwise physically assembled. (§ 2.2-3701)

#### Regarding Boards and Councils

- Encourages public access to board and council public meetings and to meetings where public comment is normally received through in person, electronic means, and other means.
- Individual board or council members may participate in meetings electronically if:
  - The Board/Council has a policy and the member notifies the chair that the member has:
    - A temporary or permanent disability or medical condition that prevents physical participation
    - A family member who has a medical condition and requires care that prevents the member from attending
    - Physical residence more than 60 miles from the identified meeting location
    - A personal matter. The member must identify the personal matter and cannot use remote participation for this reason for









more two meetings per calendar year or than 25% of meetings held per calendar year rounded up to the whole number, whichever is greater

- DBVI may hold all-virtual Board/Council meetings if
  - There is an electronic communication policy
  - The required meeting notice describes whether the meeting is in-person or all-virtual and notifies the public that the method chosen for the meeting shall not be changed unless a new notice is posted.
  - There is public access to the all-virtual meeting provided via electronic communication means
  - Electronic means allows the public to hear members participating in the all-virtual meeting and when available, to see members as well
  - A phone number or other live contact information is provided to alert the members if audio or video transmission of the meeting fails, the body must monitor these means of communication during the meeting; the members must take recess if the technology fails for the public
  - The proposed agenda, agenda packets, and all materials given to the members are available to the public in electronic format at the same time that members receive the materials (except exempt materials)
  - The public can make comment through electronic means, including written comments, at meetings where public comment is customarily received
  - No more than two members are together at any one remote location unless that location is open to the public to physically access it
  - If in closed session during an all-virtual public meeting, transmission of the meeting to the public resumes for the member's vote to certify the closed meeting (2.2-3712)
  - An all-virtual public meeting does not convene more than two times per calendar year or 25% of the meetings held per calendar year rounded up to the next whole number, whichever is greater, or is conducted consecutively with another all virtual public meeting

- Minutes of all-virtual public meetings are taken as required by 2.2-3707, which include that the meeting was held by electronic means and the type of electronic communications.
  - If a member's participation from a remote location is disapproved because of a violation of policy, the disapproval shall be included in the minutes with specificity.
- The public body shall adopt a policy, by recorded vote at a public meeting, before an all-virtual public meeting can be used. The policy shall be strictly and uniformly applied to the entire membership without exception and without regard to the identity of the member, requesting remote participation on matters that will considered or voted on at the meeting. The policy shall:
  - Describe the circumstances under which an all-virtual public meeting and remote participation will be allowed and the process that will be used for making requests to use remote participating, approving or denying requests, and creating a record of the requests.
  - Describe the number of times remote participation for personal matters or all-virtual public meetings can be used per calendar year.

A committee, subcommittee, or other entity of the board or council may adopt an electronic communication policy for the committee, subcommittee, or other entity.

#### Regarding Meeting Minutes

- Electronic communication meetings minutes must:
  - Identify the members at each remote location identified in the required meeting notices who participated in the meeting through electronic communication means,
  - Identity the members of who were physically assembled at the primary or central meeting location,
  - Identity of the members who were not present at the locations identified in the required notice but who monitored the meeting through electronic communication means.





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**VIRGINIA STATE REHABILITATION COUNCIL FOR THE BLIND AND VISION IMPAIRED**  
**Quarterly Meeting**  
**December 9, 2022**  
**397 Azalea Avenue, Richmond, VA 23227**

**SRC Members in Attendance**

**Alexa Bowe**, Arlington, Representative of Business, Industry and Labor  
**Leelynn Untalan Brady**, Suffolk, Representative of Statewide Independent Living Council  
**Annette Hyde**, Radiant, Representative of the Workforce Council  
**Edna Johnson**, Alexandria, Former or Current Recipient of Vocational Rehabilitation Services  
**Heidi Lawyer**, Henrico, Representative of Parent Training & Information Center (PEATC)  
**Liang Liao**, Richmond, DBVI, Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor, Ex-Officio Member  
**Joliefawn Liddell**, Richmond, Representative of the Client Assistance Program  
**Ricardo Lizama**, Arlington, Representative of Disability Advocacy Group  
**Marianne Moore**, Richmond, Representative of the Virginia Department of Education  
**Chanthen Nene**, Manassas, Representative of Disability Advocacy Group  
**Rachael Rounds**, Midlothian, Representative of Community Rehabilitation Services Program  
**Milford Stern**, Roanoke, Representative of Business, Industry, and Labor Via Zoom from Roanoke due to Personal Reason

**SRC Members Not Able to Attend**

**Rick Mitchell**, Richmond, Commissioner, DBVI, Ex-Officio Member

**DBVI Staff Present**

**Pam Cato**, Deputy Commissioner of Services  
**Megan Hall**, Director of Vocational Rehabilitation and Workforce Services via Zoom  
**Maggie Mills**, Executive Assistant to Commissioner Mitchell – Recorder of Minutes  
**Susan Davis**, Senior Policy Analyst and Training Coordinator

**ASL Interpreters**

**Katherine Malady**  
**Bernadette Mayhall**

**Public**

**Caroline Rammacher**

**Call to Order / Welcome and Introductions**

Chair Bowe called the meeting to order. A roundtable of introductions took place. Quorum was met.

**Adoption of Agenda**

Deputy Commissioner Cato suggested one change to the Agenda under Old and New Business. Ms. Cato recommended adding a discussion item to review the suggested Bylaws update regarding the opportunity to consider holding an all-virtual meeting. Ms. Brady motioned to adopt the change to the Agenda and Ms. Lawyer seconded. All were in favor.

**Adoption of September 9, 2022, Meeting Minutes**

Chair Bowe indicated one change to the presented Minutes. Chair Bowe's address has changed from

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Newport News to Arlington. Ms. Brady motioned to accept Minutes as presented with this change. Ms. Lawyer seconded. All were in favor

#### **Public Comment**

None

#### **Commissioner's Report – Commissioner Rick Mitchell**

Written report provided. Additional comments are as follows.

Deputy Commissioner Cato presented the Commissioner's Report in Commissioner Mitchells' absence. Ms. Cato reviewed several of the vacancies in the Services Division and gave an update on the recruitment status.

#### **Deputy Commissioner's Report – Pam Cato**

Written report provided. Additional comments are as follows.

VRCBVI hosted its annual Family and Friends Day event October 15, 2022. The theme of this event was, "What If THIS Actually Works?".

The Director of Rehabilitation Technology, Dr. Peggy Fields, officially retires January 1, 2023. Dan Aunspach will be filling her position starting December 12, 2022

#### **VR Program Update – Megan Hall**

Written report provided. Additional comments are as follows.

Ms. Hall reported via Zoom while attending her last of four seminars at the National Rehabilitation Leadership Institute (NLRI). Participants of these seminars are required to be nominated based on their demonstrating the ability to lead changes within their organization. She shared that the IT Credential Fair was held on December 8. This has been a busy quarter for DBVI Pre-ETS with an IT tiered cohort, a new pilot for Career Immersion and planning for the IT Credential Fair as well as next spring through summer. Students achieve a basic understanding of computer systems. This leads a pathway for students to participate in more information technology events. The next step will be Security+ which begins in January.

November 18-20 saw a new pilot, Careers in Action-Bridge to Success, take place in Natural Bridge, Virginia. Twenty-one students, their parents and DBVI staff all came together for an incredible weekend of growth where they learned about various employment opportunities at the Natural Bridge Safari and Hotel and Conference Center. The speaker at the event was Kendal Swartzentruber, who is the state Co-Coordinator of VDOE's I'm Determined Program and the Region 5 Training and Technical Assistance Center (TTAC) Coordinator.

#### **Old and New Business**

##### **Amendment to FOIA**

Ms. Davis reported on the Amendment to FOIA that became effective September 1, 2022 – Code of Virginia 2.2-3708.3 Meetings held through electronic communication means; situations other than declared states of emergency. Ms. Mills will send proposed language to Council Members once

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received from Ms. Davis.

### **Annual Report Update**

Mr. Stern reported that everything needed to complete the Annual Report has been received except the report from the Richmond Regional Office. Mr. Stern will send Chair Bowe the Report to review format and accessibility. It will then be sent to Ms. Mills for a final proofread. The Annual Report is due to the Governor's Office by the end of the calendar year. It was suggested that a Subcommittee be created to work on the Annual Report for next year. Volunteers will be asked for at the March meeting. Sections will be assigned to Members and a timeline will be created.

### **CSAVR/NCSAB Debrief**

Rachael Rounds represented the SRC at the NCSAB and gave a debrief of her experience. Deputy Commissioner Cato attended the CSAVR and NCSAB and gave a debrief of her experience noting that recruitment and retention within Vocational Rehabilitation was a large theme across all states. Ms. Cato also noted that accreditation requirements have changed for Rehabilitation Counseling programs leading to challenges in recruiting interns. The CSAVR 2023 Spring Conference will be held April 15-19, 2023, in Bethesda, MD. The CSAVR 2023 Fall Conference will be held October 28-November 1, 2023, in Savannah, GA. Visit the following link for more details: <https://www.csavr.org/events> The SRC sponsors one-two SRC members to attend each of these conferences.

### **SRC Appointments**

Several SRC members' terms expired in September 2022. Appointments from the Governor's Office have not yet been announced.

### **2023 Proposed Quarterly SRC Meeting Dates**

The following dates were proposed for the 2023 Quarterly SRC Meetings: March 10, June 9, September 8, December 8. Mr. Nene motioned to adopt the proposed dates. Ms. Brady seconded. All were in favor.

### **Representative Roundtable**

Several of the SRC members provided highlights on the organizations they represent.

### **Other**

Dr. Johnson proposed to have someone talk to VR Counselors regarding accommodations and offered her expertise in this area.

SRC Members were encouraged to come to March 2023 meeting with ideas of how they can become more engaged in their role as a Council Member and encouraged Members to review SRC Job Description.

### **Adjourn**

Mr. Nene motioned to end the meeting. Ms. Brady seconded the motion. All were in favor.

### **Next SRC Quarterly Meeting**

March 10, 2023

